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# Being Groomed for A Life of Sex Trafficking: The Raw and Uncut Truth

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## Sex Trafficking: Transitioning from Victim to Survivor

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**Sex Trafficking: Transitioning from Victim to Survivor**

by

Eleana M. Lukes

A Starred Paper

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

in Special Studies; Family, Crisis, Intervention

October, 2018

Starred Paper Committee:  
JoAnn M. Johnson, Chairperson  
Kathryn P. Mayhew  
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## Glossary

### Definition of Terms

**Commercial Sex:** Any sexual activity performed to receive anything of value to the individual performing the acts.

**Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC):** A commercial transaction that promotes the sexual exploitation of children in relation to stripping, prostitution, or pornography.

**Copping:** Going to buy drugs.

**Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST):** When minors are being trafficked.

**Getting Pimped On:** Phrase victims/hoes use to describe the relationship dynamics.

**Hoe:** Someone who exchanges sexual activities for monetary value.

**Licks:** Doing an illegal activity to get money or drugs, or other items of value.

**Life/The Game:** How victims, prostitutes, traffickers, and pimps relate to/describe the hustle/work they do for money or means of survival.

**Pimp/Trafficker:** A person who is in control of a prostitute/victim. The trafficker or pimp can be family, or unknown to the person being trafficked and the pimp/trafficker can be male or female. Many women in charge of brothels, or strip clubs or traffickers are normally referred to as a “**Madam**”.

**Quota:** The amount of money the victim needs to make daily

**Renegade:** A prostitute that is not under the control of a pimp or trafficker.

**Self-Medicare:** To use drugs or alcohol to mask the emotions that you are feeling. A means of escape from mental or physical harm/Using as a way to cope.

**Servicing Clients:** Performing acts of sexual nature to a customer who provides monetary value.

**Sex Trafficking/Human Trafficking:** A slavery in which a trafficker uses force, coercion, fraud, and trickery to lure or entrap individuals and force them into sex trade for monetary value.

**Sold:** exchange of goods or services; to sell; hand or give in exchange for money or other items of value to the receiver/purchaser.

**Sold Commercially:** Trafficked by another individual for value; Presenting self for sale for value.

**Stable:** A group of prostitutes who are all under control of the same trafficker/pimp.

**Survival Sex:** Sex an individual has to secure survival items; food, clothes, shelter.

**Track:** The streets on which a prostitute works.

**Tricks:** Having sex with a person in exchange for money, drugs or other items of value or trade.

**Tricks, Johns, Clients, Willie, Licks:** A person who pays for sex.

**Victim:** A person who is tricked, harmed, injured or killed because of an event, crime, or action; In this case sex trafficking.

**Victimless Crime:** A legal offense to where all individuals involved give consent and no individual is injured; emotionally, physically or mentally.

**Wife-In-Law:** What you call the other victims your trafficker/pimp also controls.

## **Chapter I: Understanding the Problem**

### **Introduction**

Sex trafficking is literally defined by *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* as “the illegal business of recruiting, harboring, transporting, obtaining, or providing a person, especially a minor for the purpose of sex.” When you talk to a victim who has been trafficked, they will define it figuratively as the ability of a trafficker to take control over your entire life, your mind, your spirit, and your body; and that’s how I felt during the time I was being trafficked. Sex trafficking may further be explained as the complete breakdown of another’s comprehension of safety. A victim I refer to as “Jade” told me she describes being “pimped on” as being stolen from reality and stranded in a life of repeated rape.

According to a January 2017, report to the Minnesota Legislature prepared by both the MN Office of Justice Programs and MN Statistical Analysis Center, trafficking laws are understood and defined by the state of Minnesota Statutes section 609.322; as Solicitation, Inducement & Promotion of Prostitution (MN Office of Justice Programs, 2017). In 2009, that law was amended to include sex trafficking. This Minnesota state law is now focusing on the actions the trafficker portrays. If the trafficker by any means or form recruited, enticed, harbored, received, provided or obtained an individual to aid in prostitution, sex trafficking has occurred. This revised portion of the Minnesota law has been considered more operative in comparison to federal laws in which it is required for prosecution of sex-trafficking to be proven that force, fraud, or coercion was used to commercially and sexually exploit a person under the age of 18.

### **Local Laws**

In 2011, Minnesota’s Safe Harbor legislation was passed and in 2014 fully implemented. Under the new Minnesota law, it states that “a minor who is under the age of 18, is considered

sexually exploited if they engage in any commercial sexual activity.” This in general solves the issue of previous struggles between the former laws that defined a minor who was being sexually exploited as a victim and a delinquent alike. On top of decriminalizing sexually exploited youth in Minnesota, the legislation of the Safe Harbor law added the clearly defined definition of sexually exploited youth into Minnesota’s child protection codes (Federal Safe Harbor Legislation, n.d.). The state of Minnesota also increased penalties for adults who have been convicted of purchasing sex, and it engaged the MN DEPT of Public Safety to create a victim-centered response model called “No Wrong Door” for those being sexually exploited.

(Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, 2017, p. 1) The victim centered model “No Wrong Door” created under the Minnesota Safe Harbor Law allows minor victims of commercial sex trafficking within the state to receive shelter, counseling, and most of all protects the exploited children from prosecution when it comes to being arrested for prostitution, if they are being trafficked or exploited.

The Minnesota department of transportation (MN-DOT) reported that in 2015, we were ranked to have the third-highest number of human trafficking cases in the United States. MN-DOT went on to report that the FBI negatively identified the Twin Cities as one of 13 U.S. States showing a “particularly high” rate of child prostitution. In response to those reports, in 2017 the Minnesota Department of Transportation launched an initiative to educate its employees about trafficking, raise awareness through outreach campaigns and take a stand with a commitment to fight human trafficking by tracking data and reporting the information to the proper organizations (Jacobs, 2017).

The National Human Trafficking Hotline Organization stated in 2016, there were 48 sex trafficking cases reported to their hotlines, the majority of those were adult females. However,



the Trafficking Hotline is available for victims to contact when in search for resources: It is not a current or accurate number of all the victims who may be in the cycle of being trafficked or exploited (The National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2018) With a firm definition of sex-trafficking supported by some horrifying statistics, the question's to be addressed in this educational works are:

1. Who is at risk to be sexually trafficked?
2. Who is a trafficker?
3. What are the characteristics to being groomed into a life of exploitation?
4. If any, what are the effects of sex trafficking? In relation to the victim.

Throughout this paper I will examine the published information surrounding these circumstances, and I will also include information and perspectives I have gained through my crisis advocacy work that supports the literature to try and understand the characteristics of being groomed into a life of sex trafficking by a pimp/trafficker. I will also use first hand experiences from victims I have spoken to regarding the stages of being groomed into a life of exploitation to create a paper that brings awareness to the community and to any youth who may potentially become at risk for being sexually trafficked or must engage in survival sex.

### **Who's at Risk?**

Being aware of the tactics traffickers use and the characteristics that go into being groomed for a life of sexual exploitation, might help save someone's life. Once aware that sex trafficking can occur right here in the United States or close to home, it is important to be informed so an individual might be able to spot the signs of a trafficker and where they can be found. On many occasions that information might not be so apparent if you are unaware of those potential properties; therefore, any person at any time can become a victim of a crime committed

against them. If we have offenders, there will always be victims. However, runaway, homeless or at-risk youth are much more susceptible to be at risk for DMST than a 35-year-old working male without those vulnerabilities. In general, a person who has limited resources are sometimes exposed to different situations that require them to make choices that sometimes supports “survival instincts” when their options are limited. Those situations can include a time in which they are without basic needs such as food, shelter, warmth and clothing. When seeking out fulfillment of those basic need individuals in high-risk situations can fall victim to sexual exploitation and trafficking.

An article written by Kaplan and Kemp in 2015 for the Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior newsletter titled “Domestic minor sex trafficking: An emerging health crisis” that went on to recognize all minors, youth, and adolescents are at risk for DMST. Many factors go into increasing that risk such as youth with backgrounds of being in the custody of the courts because of caregiver abandonment or CPS issues, children who have experienced sexual abuse, or other forms of maltreatment, and children who have suffered from neglect. Other factors that increase the risk for DMST would be children that come from homes that have experienced domestic violence (Kaplan & Kemp, 2015, p. 5). This article continued to indicate the reported age of entry into a life of DMST is around the age of 13, which supports other literature when it comes to identifying who may be at risk to be trafficked, as well as the features that traffickers pray upon when it comes to being groomed for a life of exploitation.

In relation to victim identification more supporting information comes from the Human Trafficking Report in Minnesota for 2017. In this localized report several service providers described their experience with sex trafficking tended to be surrounded by more underage victims than adult victims. It was stated that during the time this survey/report was conducted in

2015, 66% (N = 59) of the services providers who participated in the surveys that went into this report in Minnesota testified serving at least one sex trafficking victim. The victims included, 24 adult males, 239 adult females, 27 underaged male victims and 371 underaged female victims. The providers also confirmed that is a huge increase from the reports that were taken in 2013-2014 regarding youth sex trafficking. Providers have a strong inclination that the recent increase had a lot to do with the implementation of the Safe Harbor law and the No Wrong Door model supporting victim identification. Service providers trust that an increase in these numbers will continue as traffickers are starting to be held to more rigorous laws and they are finally being prosecuted for their actions (Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, 2017, pp. 9-10).

More information about victim identification factors surfaced in “Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex-trafficking of Minors in the United States” which is a guidebook created for entities to use as framework to identify risk factors in relation to sex trafficking. It was stated in this reading that another common risk factor for youth is an individual who may have dealt with a form of disruption in normative development. “Disrupted development” or “disrupted transitions” were described specifically as “precocious transitions into adulthood” or as an individual being “rushed into adulthood”. Researchers went on to explain there are links between these transitions, teen-age pregnancy, and early sexual activity in adolescents; and those transitions increase the vulnerability in youth and put them at a higher risk for becoming victims of DMST (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2014, p. 85).

### **Who Is a Trafficker?**

A trafficker is generally defined as a person who deals in, or trades with items or services that are illegal. When it comes to sex-trafficking, a trafficker is a person who is in control over a victim’s choices, their money, their body and the trafficker benefits from the transactions of

trading the victim's body for sexual pleasure to another person. A sex-trafficker can be a mother of a child, a boyfriend, a husband, a drug dealer, or a caregiver. According to an article called "Sex Trafficking and The Sex Industry: The Need for Evidence-Based Theory and Legislation" written by Ronald Weitzer for the *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* in September of 2011, a trafficker has "no standard profile" and could appear to be as normal as a truck driver or as random as a police officer. Identifying who a trafficker might be, is difficult because recruiting is sometimes considered a form of trafficking, and many of the traffickers in today's market are diverse in their tactics using current victims to recruit other individuals. Many traffickers are in the industry or led to their current life endeavors by circumstances because of exposure to this life during their early stages of development. Either their mother was trafficked by a pimp and they watched it growing up, or their father was a pimp/trafficker and they learned it from being around their parents or the community or neighborhood in which they grew-up (Weitzer, 2011, p. 1346).

The Polaris Project went on to support the previous findings and explained that many victims reported more frequently being sexually-trafficked by a partner they were in a romantic relationship with, in many cases the couple shared children together or were legally married. While others disclosed they were trafficked by family members, or guardians, 31.51% reported a trafficker as their intimate partner, 19.52% reported there was no significant attachment between victim/trafficker, 9.59% stated it was a family member who was trafficking them and lastly 4.45% stated they were trafficked by their employer. In each set of reported statistics of who is a trafficker, you can see a distinct binary system of control and power that dominates the relationship Polaris Project, 2016, p. 8).

## Supply Demand

The issue surrounding DMST on a superficial level can be understood by looking at the mere connection of supply and demand. If there was no demand for sex on a commercial level, then the sex-trafficking of others would not exist. In the *Oxford Journal* there was an article called “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking in the United States,” written in 2009 by Kimberly Kotrla that spoke about sex-traffickers being money motivated and that in itself is a strong enough incentive to drive black markets to the economics of a “sex for sale” industry. More so this article mentioned a general tolerance in American culture that tends to turn a blind eye to the issue, in a sense supporting the sex-trade industry through media glamorization, highlighting the lifestyle in a manner that makes it both appealing and acceptable to our youth. This form of “tolerance” and glamorization comes from current media trends, movies, and other forms of entertainment like video games and television that supports the trade of another human being for a sexual nature. Some examples of this cultural “tolerance” are some popular rap songs, the movie “Hustle & Flow”, or “Pretty Woman”, and games such as “Keep Pimpin” for Wii and “Grand Theft Auto” where they allow players to become a pimp, smack hoes and demand money from them for entertainment purposes (Kotrla, 2010, p. 182).

Another article supporting the supply and demand theory that drives sex-trafficking is “The Determinants of Human Trafficking: A U.S. Case Study” written by Alicja Jac-Kucharski for the *International Migration Journal* in 2012. This article highlights factors of economics in relation to sex-trafficking, suggesting that the lucrative profits of about \$30 to \$90 billion a year in revenue alone is what drives sex-traffickers to this industry. When it comes to victims in the sex trade industry, they too are motivated by the value in trade. Many struggle with needs of

survival in the form that they lack economic opportunities, lack education, the severity of poverty they live in, and lack of safe living conditions; and all these factors go into supporting the cycle of a never ending commercial sex-trade industry (Jac-Kucharski, 2012, pp. 152-153).

## **Chapter II: Conditioning**

### **Choosing a Victim**

When looking for prospects (victims) who could be conditioned and groomed for a life of exploitation, pimps tend to prey on those who are in the most vulnerable situations. Pimps look for individuals who are going to be easily influenced, naive, prospects who will be compliant, and people who are emotionally dependent or economically struggling. Generally, individuals described previously as “at risk” are going to be the ones a pimp tends to prey upon. Looking at an article written in 2014 by Joe Carter titled “9 Things You Should Know About Pimps and Sex Traffickers” it was stated that the recruitment process is the most important “component of a pimp’s business model” and that many pimps tend to go after the women that will bring in the most amount of money or that will go for higher prices among clients, this tends to be white women and under aged individuals. Minors tend to become an issue sometimes in relation to law enforcement and prosecution towards the trafficker since underage trafficking laws are more severe (Carter, 2014). The article “9 Things You Should Know About Pimps and Sex Traffickers” went on to address that pimps look for victims in a variety of environments and places such as the local mall, bus and transit stations, strip clubs, truck stops, college campuses, social media platforms, and bars, as well as high-school events, and other moderately social areas (Carter, 2014).

### **Gaining Trust and Fulfilling Needs**

The End Slavery Now Organization published a fact sheet in 2014, about the basic stages of “grooming” for sexual exploitation. According to the fact sheet the grooming process starts immediately after a trafficker picks a victim, the grooming process initially starts with gaining the victims trust. Depending on how invested the trafficker is in the process determines how long

they take to gain trust, especially with the younger victims they plan on having for a longer period. After gaining trust, the trafficker goes on to fill different needs the at-risk person or vulnerable individual was looking to get fulfilled; such as the need for housing, food, clothing or hygiene products, drugs or alcohol, and just genuine affection and attention. Many times, a trafficker only looks for victims who have drug addictions, because it will be easier to control them after providing the drug of choice, or they look for victims who are very young because they are easy to control with verbal threats and minimal physical altercations. Once that victim's need is filled by the trafficker, the trafficker prepares for "repayment" knowing the victim has no means to payback what has been given or "invested in" (Long, 2014).

### **Isolation and Manipulation**

The End Slavery Now Organization's fact sheet went on to describe the isolation and manipulation or trapping stage of the grooming process starts once a trafficker has been able to gain trust and provide needs the victim couldn't provide for themselves. When a sex-trafficker isolates you, it is to "prove" to the victim, they are the only one who provided the things for them that they wanted or needed when no one else could. The isolation may happen gradually; over time you may notice the trafficker slowly creating issues between you and your family/friends, or the trafficker may just move you out of the city where your friends and family are. A victim might see the trafficker start becoming more controlling than before, limiting or monitoring conversations with others or avoiding activities that may allow you to interact with loved ones or friends. On the other hand, a trafficker may isolate more suddenly by taking the victims phone and moving them out of state where they have no access to resources or individuals to help them escape.



After being isolated from friends, family, and other loved ones who might possibly intervene in the developing relationship the trafficker is building with the victim, manipulation begins. Manipulation helps to establish an understanding of who's in control. This manipulation is a form of abuse, and it can be psychological, emotional, financial, and physical (Long, 2014).

After a victim has been isolated, manipulated, and control has been established, fear is instilled through random acts of verbal abuse, physical abuse, and financial abuse. At this time the trafficker starts to demand repayment of the monies that were spent on clothes, food, car rides, hygiene products, cigarettes, etc., and will tend to withhold these items until the victim is complying. Prostitution is introduced to the equation as a means for the victim to start repaying the money that was spent as well as a fictitious plan for the victim to become "independent and self-supportive," in the future, unbeknownst to the victim the cycle of exploitation will never be over. If the victim declines to engage in prostitution, many times physical discipline will be applied until the victim is ready to obey. If a choice to obey is not made by the victim, the pimp may also allow the victim to be raped repeatedly until they are willing to engage in forced prostitution. Once a victim realizes they are now trapped in a life of exploitation, overtime they learn to rely on the trafficker for their basic needs of survival (Long, 2014).

In other situations, a trafficker takes all the same tactics in the isolation stage and then takes a different approach; during the isolation stage the trafficker plays off the victim's psychological underdevelopment. According to an article from 2013 by Sara Lerner called "How Seattle Pimps Groom Girls for The Street," pimp's listen to the victim's emotional needs and play the loving boyfriend role being very affectionate giving the individual lots of emotional support and attention having the victim "fall in love" with their charm. After that emotional "bond" is established the trafficker will let the victim know they are in some kind of financial

trouble and introduce prostitution as a way out for the both of them, when the victim declines, the trafficker will play mind games with the victim and threaten to take away his “love” because the victim is not willing to do anything for the trafficker, if that doesn’t work, the trafficker will resort to trickery and then violence in order to get the victim to comply with the traffickers interests (Lerner, 2013).

### **Maintaining Control**

The Cornell University Law School Social Science program posted an article called “Relationship’s Between Pimps and Prostitutes” that was assembled by Mark Grough and Toby Goldbach for their *Social Science and Law Journal* in 2010, and throughout the reading it was outlined that these, somewhat intimate interactions between prostitutes and pimps were relevant to understanding the power and control dynamics of the relationship. This article went on to report that 90% of the women interviewed had expressed being controlled by a pimp in some way. The control was established after the pimp learned personal information about the victim through brief and later more drawn out interactions, bonding, general conversations, family get-togethers, and intimate encounters. Many traffickers have good communication skills and the ability to become relatable to others in many different situations, with people from a range of different educational, cultural, and economic backgrounds (Grough, & Goldbach, 2010).

*Psychology Today* sponsored a piece called “Psychological Tactics Used by Human Traffickers” written by Melissa Withers in October of 2016. This article featured many ways a sex-trafficker maintains control in order to keep thoes in their stable in check. Maintaining control is “an art” that allows the individual you are controlling to feel special in a certain kind of way, after understanding that, it is easy to comprehend that most of control is maintained through psychological tactics. The main reason for this is because “mental enslavement is low-risk and

cost effective” in relation to a client or trick not wanting to pay top-dollar for a hoe that is all beat up, therefore it is easier for a pimp to control a hoe mentally and not physically (Withers, 2016). Many ways a trafficker maintains control psychologically is to dehumanize the victims they are dealing with. Telling the victim, they are unimportant, worthless, and forgotten by their family is a good way to keep the victim in high emotional duress. Continuing to make them believe they are helpless will allow them to rely on the pimp for basic needs. Pimps also lie to the women and make up worst case scenarios for them to believe, saying they will trade them to another pimp who is more abusive, they might say they will call the police on them and have them arrested for stealing from the pimp, or make the victim believe that if they try to run-away and go home the family will no longer want them because they are on drugs or a prostitute and the family is ashamed. By making a victim believe they are no longer in control over their life or choices, creates an overall distrust for others, even the family they really knew they could trust before. Traffickers also make fictitious promises and say once all debt is repaid then the victim will be free to leave, so victims stay believing in this hope of freedom (Withers, 2016).

### **Chapter III: Entering the Game**

#### **The Life**

The life for a person being trafficked consists of constant availability to tricks no matter how you feel. Many times, a trafficker may have connections to escort agencies that will hire workers, then they call and give information regarding clients who are seeking sexual services or entertainment; this helps to create a more constant flow of revenue for the trafficker. If a sex-trafficker is leery of an escort agency or employs women who are underage, those traffickers tend to utilize different online platforms such as Backpage.com or Cityvibe.com to post ads for victims directly without the use of an agency; limiting the need to pay an agency fee. From personal experience, when the phones are slow (the agency is slow to give you customer's information) many pimps require the girls to work the track or local truck stops; this entails walking around until someone shows an interest in you.

According to the World Health Organization and a report they published in October of 2013, sex workers tend to experience several different forms of violence during their exposure to this lifestyle. The violence sex workers tend to experience includes physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence. Physical violence implemented by pimps or clients and other sex workers includes but is not limited to being restrained, having cigarettes or cigars put out on their body, being punched or slapped, being hit with objects such as bottles, belts, or hangers. Many women get their hair pulled, have been dragged by their hair, been choked, or assaulted with a gun, knife or other object. Some of the physical violence can cause significant harm or has even resulted in death. When it comes to the sexual violence, some sex workers have been raped or gang raped by multiple individuals, raped with objects that are neither sexual in nature, some

have been forced to commit acts that degrades or humiliates them (Addressing Violence against Sex Workers, 2013, p. 5).

The life of exploitation is not just limited to constant violation of your body, it effects your mind and other aspects of your entire being. Some additional factors that go into living in “the life” include having money that was earned through exploitation taken from you or generally “extorted” to the trafficker. Many victims are forced to take drugs, in an attempt for the trafficker to have a more complete hold on them or a better way to control the victim. Many sex workers, whether they are renegades or under control of a pimp, may not be forced to use drugs; however, they indulge to cope with the stress of “the life” or as a way to mask the emotions that go along with being used and violated for a fee. Sex workers who make their living by street walking and working “the tracks” may suffer harassment from other working individuals, or from the police, or even other pimps trying to get them to “choose up” or pick a different trafficker to escape the violence or rules of a current trafficker. Depending on the policies from city to city, some sex workers might be forced to take STI or HIV testing or even denied health care in some situations. Many women are deprived sleep and proper nutrition from traffickers until their daily quota is met, if not met they might not be entitled to rest or eat (Addressing Violence against Sex Workers, 2013, p. 5).

### **Turning Tricks; Looking at Things from a Feminist Viewpoint**

Turning tricks is humiliating and it has a way of being able to break one’s spirit, that is exactly what I felt when I was forced to service clients for a profit that only benefited my trafficker. According to a victim I refer to as “Shine” she said that even when she was having her monthly menstruation her trafficker would make her “pack herself” to still turn tricks, it did not

matter. From a radical feminist viewpoint regarding sex trafficking the whole ordeal is dehumanizing and degrading.

According to Radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and the Socialist feminism perspectives, sex trafficking is the direct relation of a binary system of social and economic inequality. Comparing information from “Feminist Issues in Prostitution” by Sarah Bromberg that was presented to the International Conference on Prostitution at Cal State University in 1997, these three perspectives agree that prostitution and exploitation should be eradicated in order to eliminate the entire issue. I agree with the radical perspective of feminism in the form that legal action should be taken across the board, implementing criminal charges for clients who purchase sex; just the same as sex workers are charged when violating laws in relation to selling sex (Bromberg, 1997).

When it comes to the perspectives of liberal feminism and existentialist feminism I strongly disagree with their perspectives, mainly because of the fact these viewpoints believe prostitution is liberating and empowering because the prostitute is exercising their civil rights and their right to choose; my body; my choice, basically. Yet, I ask where is “my body, my choice” in relation to sex-trafficking and being under the control of a pimp? In no way shape or form did I feel liberated when my trafficker implemented a \$2500.00 a day quota; this quota forced me to have to service at least 10-18 clients a day providing services that ranged from oral sex, anal sex, and vaginal sex for a mere \$250.00 per person if I was extremely lucky! Moving forward, when I was no longer under the control of a trafficker, for means of survival the unequal economic society I live in, in a way, forced me to still service clients in order to acquire the basic needs for existence. Once I was prostituted by my trafficker I became a criminal when arrested, the lack of grace and opportunities in my community limited the jobs available when it

came to businesses employing a person with a criminal record. Looking at prostitution from my viewpoint, a radical feminist who was trafficked by a violent pimp; there is no liberation or empowerment in having sex with a complete stranger for a few dollars 16-20 times a day. Enduring such repeated and unwanted violations to my body and spirit only provided me with immediate physical pain to my body, as well as emotional pain and psychological scarring that still exists twenty-one years after I had been trafficked.

### **The Effects of Trafficking**

It is said by many victims I have advocated for, that the effects of sex trafficking and prostitution are everlasting, I agree. The *Psychiatric Times Journal* issued an article titled “Prostitution is Sexual Violence” by Melissa Farley, PhD in 2004 that specifically stated “most prostitution includes traumatic stressors that are categorized as DSM-IV criterion A1 of the diagnosis of PTSD” supporting the claims that victims alike make when they say the effects are detrimental. This article went on to relay that extended exposure to trauma related events such as rape, physical harm, and exploitation adds to the revictimization that prostitutes cannot escape from as long as they’re in “the life.” Depending on the degree of intensity and the amount of overexposure to negative experiences many victims of trafficking also experience comorbid mental health diagnosis of generalized anxiety, substance dependence and abuse issues, personality disorders, suicide ideation, mood disorders, dissociative disorders, and other attributes or symptoms that follow traumatic brain injuries (Farley, 2004, p. 2). Women who have been exposed to trafficking and prostitution are not always equipped with condoms to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STI/STD’s) therefore, many tend to suffer from infertility issues from prolonged exposure to infections like chlamydia,

gonorrhea, pelvic inflammatory diseases and other such related sexually transmitted infections (Farley, 2004, p. 2),

Another lasting effect of prolonged exploitation in the form of prostituting yourself for survival purposes and being sexually trafficked include, for many individuals a criminal record. Many street walkers, escorts and other sex-workers have soliciting, lude and lascivious acts, or general prostitution and drugs charges that are either misdemeanors or of the felony level. The criminal record always follows you and never goes away and this is something that was derived from the direct involvement of exploitation, controlled by a trafficker or chosen as a path for survival purposes.

It was stated in "The Second Chance They Deserve": Vacating Convictions of Sex Trafficking Victims written by Alyssa M. Barnard in 2014 for the *Columbia Law Review* that many of the individuals who are detained for prostitution or loitering related crimes actually fit the model for sex-trafficking victims, in spite of that, the individuals (especially those who are repeatedly arrested for the same pretenses) are inevitably convicted of crime and never offered victim services; branding them as criminals rather than victims in need. Many times, law enforcement may know that a victim is being trafficked, and still prosecute the victim, in hopes to gain more information about the trafficker in an attempt to collect a conviction for the trafficker with more heightened charges such as a felony (sex-trafficking), in relation to the victims' charges of misdemeanor (prostitution/solicitation,) all the while still not implementing victim services when clearly the need is apparent. The lack of victim services supports a more negative outcome to victims because they lack the support needed when it comes to transitioning from a life of exploitation, to a life of being a survivor (Barnard, 2014, p. xx).



## **Community Action**

Community action is the foundation for implementing change within a binary system starting with support in the form of access to related victim services that focus on providing shelters, holistic healing, and spiritual regeneration for individuals that have been victimized through exploitation and commercial trafficking. This will look like, when implemented, a framework such as the model created in Minnesota and first described in the beginning of the educational paper which is the “No Wrong Door” victim services policy and commitment. However, it should be detailed and tailored to support adult victims who have been exploited for extended period of time. It would also look like the expungement of criminal records that are directly derived from victimization in relation to sex trafficking and exploitation. Other victim services should be emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and job skills training to help secure a more supported transition from exploitation to a life of normalcy in the sense of no more victimization.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are many factors that go into community action and victim services to support and give exploited individuals another chance at a life of freedom of choice. No human being should be subjected to violations that limit their civil rights and oppress them at the expense of another individual. Being that individuals can easily be silenced by the control of a violent trafficker, it is our job as community members, human beings, and activists to be their voice, advocating for the life that has been stolen, right before our eyes.

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**Sex Trafficking: Transitioning from Victim to Survivor**

by

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## Glossary

### Definition of Terms

**Black Market:** Illegal or illicit trade in goods or commodities in violation of official regulations; also: a place where such trade is carried on.

**Commercial Sex:** Sexual acts committed in which anything of value is received by any person involved in the process.

**Daddy:** A term male pimps make their victims call them.

**Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)/Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (SCEC):** Sexual transactions or activities that involve a minor or child in exchange for items of value; even promise thereof; to the child or to another person.

**Human/Sex Trafficking:** A slavery in which a trafficker uses force, coercion, fraud, and trickery to lure or entrap individuals and force them into sex trade for monetary value.

**Pimp/Trafficker:** Person(s) who controls victims/prostitutes; is in control of all or partial of victim/individual earnings; Person who deals or trades in something illegal.

**Self-Medicare:** Taking drugs/medicine outside the prescribed or directives of a health care provider.

**Servicing Clients:** Performing acts of sexual nature to a customer who provides monetary support.

**Sold:** exchange of goods or services; to sell; hand or give in exchange for money or other items of value to the receiver/purchaser.

**Sold Commercially:** To be sexually trafficked or exploited by another individual, through coercion, violence, threats or assumption of violence; trade sexual activities for means of survival or drugs.

**Survival Sex:** Where a disadvantaged individual/victim trades sexual activities for food, shelter, drugs, or any item of value.

**Victim/Survivor:** A person who is tricked, harmed, injured or killed as a result of an event, crime, or action. In this case sex trafficking; A victim who has been sexually trafficked.

**Victimless Crime:** A term used to describe a legal activity in which all individual/parties involved consent to, and no party/individual is injured either mentally, financially, physically or otherwise.



## **Chapter I: Understanding the Issue**

### **Introduction**

You can write an entire book about the struggles victims of sex trafficking face after trauma. Yet, it can only be understood if you have a strong grasp of the issue itself. The general statistics surrounding sex trafficking are both eye-opening and astounding. In 2015, *Breaking Free* reported that everyday there are at least 8,000-12,000 women and girls being sold commercially in the state of Minnesota alone. On average a single victim may be forced to service anywhere from 5-15 clients per day 7 days a week. The *Minnesota Women's Press* listed an independent research study by the Schapiro Group that recorded the number of minors being trafficked via internet ads in various cities. They determined that in August of 2010, there were 124 girls sold through online advertising in Minnesota, this report indicated a 55% increase since February of 2010 (Mennanteau, n.d.). The literature I compiled for this educational paper comes from written works published in the form of qualitative research studies, case studies available to the public, statistical information from public records in the form of court cases, or police stings, as well as my personal first-hand experience as a victim of sex trafficking and from my working as an on-call crisis advocate for victims of sex trafficking and sexual assault. Other literature I reference comes from non-government officials and government officials alike in the form of reports published for statistical information or educational purposes, as well as survivor stories and statements I acquired from interviews to obtain a complete picture of the obstacles victims face as they transition from a life of exploitation.

### **Facing Reality**

Looking at the trafficking industry, this so called victimless circle of exploitation tends to generate billions of dollars each year in profits on the black market. These statistics are translated

from a 2014 report, posted by the Urban Institute. In this report they estimated the underground sex economy in the US ranged from \$39.9 million in Denver, Colorado, to \$290 million in Atlanta, Georgia; a horrifying number of children being sold commercially for sex across the nation. Sex trafficking has been reported across all 50 of the United States. Recently, as at the end of 2017, the International Labor Organization estimated there are least 4.5 million people trapped in forced sexual exploitation across the world. The statistics further disclose that 90% of all sex trafficking victims are women & girls and about half of all sex/human trafficking victims are legally minors under the tender age of 18 (Human trafficking: Not all black or white, 2017).

More chilling facts are reported from the Polaris Project in 2016; 1 in 3 girls will be lured, enticed or even forced into prostitution within 48 hours of running away from home, or being on the streets, and that the average age of entry into prostitution in the United States is between 12-15 years old. Homeland Security drew my attention to the United States Federal law statute that reads: *“any minor person that is under the age of 18 who is induced to perform commercial sex acts is therefore declared a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether he or she is forced or coerced.”* With that definition you start computing the enormous numbers, which generates to about 300,000 child victims who are trapped in a life of human trafficking just in the United States.

The raw facts are chilling, so are the false notions that surround the issue of sex trafficking. There are so many myths and misconceptions surrounding sex trafficking, so a paper such as mine that will bring those myths/misconceptions to light, is important. At the same time, it needs to be considered the many obstacles victims face as they transition from a life of sexual exploitation. My interest from this written work is to bring awareness to adolescents, family, and the community; in hope this may also serve as a resource to other victims looking for both

support and guidance when trying to make sense of this chaos surrounding their life. This paper is also being written to create awareness to everyone who could benefit from the content.

### **Addressing the Myths**

A main assumption regarding sex trafficking is that it is a victimless crime. A victimless crime is defined as a legal offense to which all parties consent and no party involved is injured in any way. Sex trafficking is not a victimless crime, this is false; whoever is being trafficked is the victim, as well as their family and all those affected by it. The Human Trafficking Hotline reports that many assume sex trafficking only happens in other country's or "secret markets." That is untrue, it happens everywhere. Others tend to believe that sex trafficking and even prostitution is sexy, glamorous, and profitable, like they made it seem in the movie "Pretty Woman" with Julia Roberts. That belief is fallacious as well, when you ask the survivors of sex trafficking, they strongly disagree, the life is nowhere near glamorous.

Some believe, yet it is a clear misunderstanding, that sex trafficking requires movement across state borders or national lines. However, it can occur within one state, from city to city, house to house, and hotel to hotel. Some myth other individuals tend to believe true is that victims of sex trafficking *always* come from poverty or unstable backgrounds, that is false. Many victims who have been or are currently being trafficked come from very stable homes with both parents and were raised in middle-class/upper-class neighborhoods. It's easy to imagine a teenager who gets into a fight/disagreement with mom/dad one night and runs out of the house. While out they fall victim to traffickers and do not come back, because with little street knowledge or experience it is easy to be manipulated by someone with ulterior motives. In comparison, an individual who grew up in poverty and in very high-risk situations might have

more street smarts and experience to have established a heightened sense of awareness about those potential dangers and predators.

Additional misconceptions are that individuals being trafficked always come forward right away. The truth is, many trafficking victims take years to find the courage to escape or leave their trafficker or pimp for fear of retaliation in the form of beatings if caught, or towards their family and loved ones. Some never escape; which is why the numbers will never be accurate when determining the amount of sex trafficking victims.

The simplest and most naive misconstruction people have is that these victims can quit “the life” and never return, whenever they choose. This assumption is also very untrue and comes with many limited options. Where are they going to go? There are so many different obstacles to overcome when a person has spent time being victimized emotionally, mentally, and even physically, on a repeated basis. This person needs to have their entire life rebuilt, including learning to develop new daily routines, and learning how to live being in control of their own decisions, which before they were not allowed that privilege of free choice.

### **Asking the Right Questions**

Summing up this much statistical data in a short amount of space only makes me probe to find answers to deeper questions yet to be asked. From what I realized within the research and literature I compiled, is that the information never expresses the transition from “the life” in the victims’ voices. In searching for a way to implement action, we need to know:

- What risk factors go into identifying victims of trafficking or exploitation?
- What facilities house adult sex-trafficking victims for enough time it takes to rebuild their entire life?

- What are programs doing to help child victims, that have now grown into adulthood, that are still being exploited?
- What of those resources are available for sex trafficking victims here in the state of Minnesota?
- What obstacles will victims face when it comes to leaving “the life?” And what does support from the community look like?

I pose these questions because all the literature I came across tended to be fact driven, based on what victims experienced only discovered during police contact and case studies. Everything I considered was published in the last 10 years. I do however, recognize that it is hard to determine from information included in court cases, police reports, and stings conducted, what victims need emotionally, mentally, and physically to transition from the life of constant victimization, into being in control of one’s decisions and choices about their future. Records and documents collected to compile data on the issue of sex trafficking, the places it occurs and who it affects, tends to exclude the point of view of a victim and the obstacles they face daily while trying to transition from one high risk situation to an entirely different lifestyle that does not included being isolated, exploited, and violated. As you can see throughout my personal writing I have been performing a descriptive analysis of the published literature to find a solid understanding about the issues surrounding sex trafficking. To get the victims point of view, I will incorporate what I have learned from my transition as a sex trafficking victim, with other victim’s current struggles. I will also try to universally answer the question of what it takes from the community regarding support and outside resources to help other survivors gain control over a life that was always theirs, but until this point has been stolen and held captive from themselves and the world.

## **Chapter II: Victim Identification and Exploitation**

### **Feminist Viewpoint**

The Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center created a report called "Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota." This report sets the foundation for victim identification in relation to age of entry into a life of being trafficked in Minnesota, as well as an insight to victim's racial identification. According to the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center the average age for entry into the life of prostitution or sexual exploitation tends to connect to different life circumstances (Pierce, 2009). However, 90% of the sex trafficking survivors that were assisted by the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center reported they entered the trade long before they were 18. Another 42% were younger than 15 when they entered the sex trade industry and three were between the age of 10 and 14.

In a UCLA law review written by Cheryl Nelson Butler, called "The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking" it was suggested that popular culture and current media trends support the sexual objectification of minority youth in America, which in turn enhances their risk by increasing their vulnerabilities in relation to sexual exploitation (Butler & UCLA; Law Review, 2015, p. 1486). This article addresses the fact that current media films and other kinds of pop culture tends to look at pimps from a viewpoint of being "folkloric heroes." By the same token, glorifying a prostitute's role for supporting her pimp yet in the same moment degrading the women for selling their bodies (Butler & UCLA; Law Review, 2015, p. 1486). One example of this current depiction in popular media is the movie "Hustle and Flow" starring Terrence Howard in 2005 (Hustle & Flow, 2018). In this film the pimp is glorified because he can rap, and since he is musically inclined that transfers over to the reason he exploits the hoes in his stable; that and

the fact that he oversees making sure everyone's basic needs get met. The pimp in this movie provides for the others and sponsors his music career from the money he takes from the women he exploits. In the movie the pimp "DJay" has three hoes; Nola, a young spunky Caucasian-American girl, Shug, an African-American girl who is pregnant, and Lexus, who is also African-American and has a young child.

"The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking" went on to express links between American culture, sexual objectification, and the forms of structured racism in relation to poverty, gender discrimination, and societal structures; a suggestion that adds additional risk factors to minority's when it comes to being targets for coerced prostitution, sex trafficking, and exploitation at the control of traffickers or tricks/johns alike (Butler & UCLA; Law Review, 2015, p. 1488). It was also stated in this article the reason for the high rates of minority, specifically African-American sex-trafficking victims, in comparison to their racial counterparts is because "racialized sexualization as well as exploitation of people of color developed during the slavery and colonization periods" (Butler & UCLA; Law Review, 2015, p. 1481). This impacted and reinforced views overtime regarding power and control, as well as beliefs about the availability of minorities for the commercial sex trade industry.

In 2013, the National Victims of Crime Organization informed on the cases reported in relation to sex trafficking that, of the survivors 40.4% were African-American, 25.6% were Caucasian-American, 23.9% were of Hispanic origin, 4.3% were Asian, and 5.8% were labeled as "other" (Crime Information and Statistics, 2013). Reinforcing the assumption that minorities are being trafficked at a higher rate than their racial counterparts; comes a statistical report the Rights-4-Girls Organization posted titled "Racial & Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade." It was determined in a most recent collection of numbers which derived from a 2-year assessment of

sex trafficking incidents reported across the nation, that 94% of the exploited victims were female, of that, 40% were Black, and 24% were Latina (“Racial & Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade,” 2017). In the state of South Dakota alone, the Rights-4-Girls organization stated that Native-American women make-up 40% of sex trafficking victims in a population where they represent only 8%. In Nebraska 50% of victims sold through online advertising were reported as African-American and in that general population African-Americans make up only 5% of the public. In contrast, individuals purchasing sex in the state of Minnesota were reported in 2017, from a study included in the article “Racial & Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade,” are “disproportionally” married white men, that are middle or upper class (“Racial & Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade,” 2017).

Looking at the general commercial sex industry from a feminist point of view, I find the abolitionist framework to be the most effective when it comes to implementing change within our society. According to “Feminist Current” a blog and podcast founded by Meghan Murphy a Canadian journalist and radical feminist; it was stated in 2013 that the abolitionist viewpoint to feminism comes from the groups of feminists that believe in those seeking to purchase sex should be criminalized, in a hope to reduce prostitution altogether. Not only is this a feminist viewpoint but socialists and anti-capitalists agree with this framework too. Abolitionists tend to look at prostitution as a cause and effect of inequality, focusing more so on gender inequality. (“Arguing against the industry of prostitution: Beyond the abolitionist versus sex worker binary,” 2013). I agree with this abolitionists framework in the fashion that we need to start requesting support from our governments all over the world, to work toward the elimination of the sex trade industry all together. I find too many flaws with endorsing perspectives that support the exploitation of others or their body. No matter how protected a woman may be when it comes to



laws that decriminalize prostitution or laws that fail to regulate sexual violence or exploitation, the lasting effects of the emotional pain from exploitation cannot be reversed. No amount of government regulation can protect a victim from the factors that go along with sex-trafficking such as drug addiction that stems from self-medicating, or physical violence from pimps and clients, or anxiety and mental-health issues that come from living in such a chaotic lifestyle for extended periods of times.

In relation to implementing change surrounding sex trafficking the perspective that I feel resonates most with the current issues of exploitation is radical feminism. This perspective stands on the viewpoint that sexual violence against women, is not necessarily about a sexual arousal so intense that it causes one to act toward another in a sexual violating manor, rather the fact that it is a struggle for power and control. Radical feminism explains that the oppression of women comes directly from patriarchy, and it recognizes that patriarchy is a social construction of a binary system that is designed to dominate others and women remain at its core however, our male counterpart emerges on top as omnipotent. This system of domination is the radical feminist's explanation of sex trafficking and why it exists. A radical feminist framework theory towards this issue would be that women are looked at as subordinate to men and that we are their commodities as they see it to do with our bodies as they please. A viewpoint I highly disagree with; my body is not for another to do as they please ("Feminist views on prostitution," 2018)

Radical feminist tends to work against the system or against its boundaries, but they resist from working within the systems bounds. An example of a way that a radical feminist might work outside the system to help women trapped in sex trafficking is taking information to the streets. A group of considered radical feminists would be the advocates that take a bunch of business cards from local Minneapolis agency's like P.R.I.D.E or Breaking Free in St. Paul, MN,

walk up and down Lake Street in Minneapolis (a common avenue where prostitutes work) and start handing them out to working women/girls explaining that there are organizations that help women transition from “the life”, places that provide safe housing and services. This simple action is certainly a way to continue promoting social change from the lens of a radical feminist perspective. Radical Feminists are revolutionary and see many fundamental flaws in the system and that’s why they work around it. Radical feminism is women-centered, and they also demand that the women among them own and live their politics and stand behind their “radical perspective.”

A weakness with radical feminism is that since it is basically women participating in personal systems and not men’s systems or outside systems, that tends to lead to separatism. When separatism divides unity of gender such as women, then somebody must respond with “defining” what a woman consists of; this is highly problematic because it leaves out transgender individuals and when people start defining what gender is and dictating whom can be a part of that, it causes more oppression rather than helping the original cause. Radical feminists fail to see the way they oppress other women through issues of such. Radical feminists tend to, with their perspective, assume that all women have the same struggles, the same traits, the same wants which is essentialism and they ignore the huge differences that are universal with women. This is important when it comes to sex trafficking and providing services for women and victims who are struggling in the life as well as in relation to victim identification. If we assume that we all have the same experiences when it comes to victim identification several will be left out and unaccounted for.

## **Risk Factors**

The means of entry into a life of exploitation comes in many forms which include but are not limited to stripping, exotic dancing (privately or in clubs) escort services, survival sex, being recruited or trafficked by boyfriends, pimps or gangs. Victims can also enter the life by being exploited, trafficked or sold by family members and friends or by being approached by johns after running away.

Several influences account for entry into the life of exploitation, some of these factors include history of abuse or trauma in the family, at risk youth who have had history of running away, being abandoned or thrown away by caregivers. At risk youth that have a family history that involves exposure to abuse, violence or other kinds of exploitation or sexual abuse, and childhood exposure to a “normalization to violence.” As well as the factors of drug addiction and mental or emotional vulnerability (Pierce, 2009). The factors that support the reasoning why someone fall victim to sex trafficking only enhance my research questions about the obstacles and barriers involved when it comes to trying to exit the sex trade industry, and where the support and protection comes from.

Trying to identify those at risk to be trafficked is a monumental task, any person is at risk at any given time in their life is what I like to say. However, an exploratory study conducted by Karen Countryman-Roswurm and Brien L. Bolin for the article “Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: Assessing and Reducing Risk” did a good job of describing ways we can educate our youth that find themselves in vulnerable situations by increasing their knowledge about how to create and maintain healthy boundaries. The study also explains the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and support’s desires and expectations towards mental, physical, sexual and emotional respect. These interactions were conducted over a 3-month period

with ten psychoeducational group interventions focused on working with 23 either runaway, homeless, or street youth who are possibly at risk for sex trafficking (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014, p. 521). They also talked about teaching ways to exit an unhealthy relationship safely should you find yourself in a connection that is “explosive” or toxic.

I previously addressed that there are many factors that go into how an individual may end up victim to sex trafficking; many at-risk youth and youth alike are still in danger. To try and educate young people who are currently not at an immediate risk, the anti-sex trafficking charity “Shared Hope International” created a curriculum called “Chosen” that was designed to educate youth on “how to avoid being trafficked.” This curriculum will be implemented/piloted into seventeen middle schools in Washington State by the Washington State Catholic Diocese. Eventually they are expecting to transition nationally to other schools across the nation (American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists, 2013, p. 3). Assuming this curriculum will also be implemented into the school systems nationally, it is reassuring to know that our youth will not be so “in the dark about” the situation that affects neighborhoods across the country, and neighborhoods right here at home.

For those who are not so fortunate and fall victim to commercial sex trafficking, it is up to the community to provide victim identification when those who are being trafficked do not come forward. The medical branches can be an asset to the constant fight against sex trafficking. The Health and Human Rights Journal highlighted an article centered around strengthening the gaps in victim identification by utilizing the medical emergency establishments to help with victim identification. The article “Human Trafficking Identification and Service Provision in the Medical and Social Sectors” wrote that anywhere from 30-87.8% of trafficked individuals receive medical care at some point and time during their exploitation. Individuals who have been

trafficked have tremendous reasons to need medical care; as stated, some include sexually transmitted infections/diseases, physical injuries, suicidal ideation, depression, substance abuse issues, dental issues, malnutrition, anxiety, PTSD, and sometimes life-threatening issues from unsafe abortions.

### **Community–Social Responsibility**

The contact that victims have with medical service representatives can be another way of closing the gaps regarding positive victim identification across the nation. The Kansas University school of Law’s Medical-Legal Partnership Clinic (MLP Clinic) has partnered with medical professionals in Kansas City to allow free medical services to low-income patients. However, in 2013 the MLP Clinic administrators and students alike were promoted to create the Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Initiative (ASHTI) and that extended their free services to also include victims of trafficking. This article went on to identify an intervention tool created by the students in similar form to the Polaris Project’s assessment tool, to present to the medical facility in KC for consideration for victim identification. The intervention tool, if accepted by medical professionals will be used to connect trafficking victims to community resources upon being discharged. The only limitations to the intervention tool is that it has yet to be accepted and implemented and after being implemented, many communities nationwide are not supported to provide medical service to the many trafficking victims that are in need.

Recently published here in the *St. Cloud Times* newspaper late 2017, was article written by Jenny Berg, David Unze, and Stephanie Dickrell (2016), called “Sex Trafficking: The Victims Next Door.” The article reported that the Stearns County Attorney’s Office has filled charges against more than one hundred men in the last 3.5 years who have been caught trying to purchase sex from working women in the area. Shockingly eight of these men tried to solicit a

girl younger than 18 and there were at least three who were arrested more than once during local Stearns county stings targeted at sex buyers also known as “tricks” and “johns”. This same article stated that from January 1, 2013 and July 11, 2016, at least 81 of the men were convicted of these charges. Not a single person who was charged with purchasing or attempting to purchase sex has been found not guilty (Berg, Dickrell, & Unzie, 2016, p. 1). If any local readers are wondering if this issue happens close to home, it was confirmed through the *St. Cloud Times* report that in the areas of St. Cloud, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids, sex trafficking is taking place.

During the time this article was made it detailed that women being trafficked, have been identified by the Central Minnesota Sex Trafficking Task Force, and there are more than 200 different women that have worked in this area during the time this report was being recorded. After being identified as a victim, the women are then offered “a chance at getting out of life as a prostitute” as explained in this article. The so-called “chance to get out of the life of prostitution” is presented to the victims in the form of a program called Women of Worth which is located in St. Cloud, MN. The program is run by the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center, it was created in August of 2015, the purpose of the group is to try and help the girls and women being trafficked in the area by allowing them a chance to have their prostitution charges dropped by participating in a program they offer (Berg et al., 2016).

### **Limitations**

The Women of Worth program is currently one of only a handful in the state designed just for women who’ve been sexually exploited. The program includes two-individual one-on-one group sessions: plus, ten weekly multi-individual group sessions that span a total of seventeen hours (Berg et al., 2016). The limitations to this offer to “get out of the life of prostitution” is that it is just a program that consists of talking to a crisis advocate in a one on one setting or

group setting. Once you complete the groups, pending charges of prostitution will be dropped. However, no housing is available, no protection is available for victims who have to escape their traffickers or pimp to attend the groups. The Women of Worth group has limited programming and limited community options in relation to relocating victims to safer places, or when it comes to providing life skills preparation and other job training programs. This group lacks the resources to help with the transition of victimization to a place in which the victim is in control of their life. So, is this really protecting and helping victims? From my experience, a victim needs safe housing before they may even begin the lengthy process of rebuilding their life, this program does not provide the stability needed to obtain that. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, individuals require certain necessities to be met before they can enter life stages that promote growth. It is stated on Simple Psychology in the five-stage model to Maslow's Theory of Motivation that deficiency needs must be addressed before an individual is able to meet growth needs. Deficiency needs also called d-needs are a combination of physiological needs that include basic needs of food, warmth, rest, and water. Basic safety needs that consist of security and safety. Psychological needs of belongingness and love needs, which include friends and intimate relationships; and esteem needs, the feeling of accomplishment. These deficiency needs emerge after being denied or deprived of and motivate individuals to obtain the needs when they go unmet for extended periods of time. Motivation to fulfill the needs becomes more intense the longer they go without. Vice versa, the motivation to meet these needs will decrease once the need is met. In relation to growth needs the opposite is true. For instance, growth needs are self-fulfillment needs of reaching one's full potential, being creative and having self-actualization. The desire for this increases the more you achieve or the more an individual tends to succeed. Many individuals operate in the sense that their basic needs require attention before

they can even focus on trying to seek inner growth and outer change, especially individuals that have experienced crisis and trauma such as victims of sex trafficking (McLeod, 2007).

In an article written by Jane Hoback for the National Conference of State Legislatures magazine called “Children: Not for Sale” protecting the victims was the main topic of the article. “Children: Not for Sale” specifically spoke about the laws in the state of Minnesota which decriminalizes prostitution for sexually exploited youths under the age of 15. Known to the public as the Safe Harbor Law passed in yet revised in 2013 to include victims under the age of 18 (Hoback, 2016, p. 27). This law also increased the penalties for commercial sex offenders/traffickers as well as created and implemented a Minnesota Statewide victim-centered help model that is now known as “No Wrong Door” service model. These laws promoted youth-based centers such as Heartland Girls Ranch to create specific programs that diligently serve *minor* victims who are protected under the Safe Harbor Law as victims of sex trafficking. Heartland Girls Ranch is in Benson, Minnesota and was founded in 1992. Heartland Girls’ Ranch (HGR) is a group home licensed by the Department of Corrections for girls ages 12-21. HGR is an active participant on the statewide MN Human Trafficking Task Force and in 2003, implemented their Hearts for Freedom Program that has 8 beds to serve girls 12-17 who are victims of commercial sexual trafficking and/or have life experiences that put them at high-risk of being exploited.

## **Obstacles**

PRIDE/TeenPride (From PRostitution to Independence, Dignity & Equality) has provided supportive services to the Minneapolis communities since 1990s, just as some of the other programs were being implemented. This is an amazing program that brings healing and protects victims who are minors yet leaves the adult trafficked victims without any kind of



support. PRIDE/TeenPride offers counseling and support groups for victims of sex trafficking and exploitation. They also offer criminal justice advocacy, support services for teen-victims and their parents. The program has a referral process that exploited teens can apply to, after acceptance the program will provide placement where girls can be safe, get help with basic needs and have access to community resources partnering with places like Heartland Girls Ranch.

In 1996, Breaking Free was founded by Vednita Carter, a victim of sex trafficking and then the current director of women's services with a non-profit organization called WHISPER. WHISPER (Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt) was closing its doors due to funding issues and Ms. Carter continued to try to fulfill the need for support from the community for survivors of sex trafficking. Over the next 19 years Breaking Free would serve as one of the state's leading non-profit organization providing resources to more than 7,000 clients and reaching over 22,000 individuals via street outreach while continuing to grow its programming. It was not until 2001 that Breaking Free was able to implement a housing program for survivors. The Village Place is Breaking Free's permanent housing facility and was opened through a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program it offers a 54-unit apartment complex master leased by Breaking Free with one- and two-bedroom units.

In October of 2011, Alan Johnson from The Columbus Dispatch was quoted saying "The United States contains less than a dozen shelters (under 100 beds) that cater specifically to trafficked women and youth. Breaking Free's housing program has been providing safety and shelter to our clients since 2001." The Breaking Free's permanent housing program caters only to women (and their children) who participate in and complete their Women's programming. Breaking Free refers to their housing program as "permanent housing", because the non-profit is

not mandated by funding to require a time limit of stay for its residents. The main goal of the program is hope and designed in a way that clients can utilize the programs resources and supportive services to achieve self-sufficiency, because of that the waiting lists to get into the program are extremely lengthy and it is hard for them to service the abundance of growing need in the community. With the constant demand for support and the lack of organizations in Minnesota it only creates more of a need for places that serve adult victims of commercial sex trafficking, and up until this point there were none and Breaking Free was standing alone.

### **Chapter III: From Victim to Survivor**

#### **Finding the Answers**

Since 2001, when it comes to shelter, supportive service programs, and transitional housing, Breaking Free has stood as a foundation for servicing victims across the state as a limited “individualized” resource. Until now, implement Cynthia (CeCe) Terlouw. CeCe has worked for Heartland Girls Ranch in Benson, Minnesota, since 1992. In her almost 24-year tenure, she delegated everything from no operations to program development. CeCe was named HGR's Executive Director in 2008, and not long after that the Executive Director of Strategic Development in 2015. Considering her strong leadership, Heartland Girls Ranch became a model product of the “No Wrong Door” program being recognized throughout the state for their Hearts for Freedom Program that services at-risk and sexually exploited/trafficked youth. CeCe grew up in Arden Hills and graduated from Mounds View High receiving a full athletic scholarship to the University of Minnesota, where she obtained her B.S. in Therapeutic Recreation and Minor in Dance. After graduation, her passion to be of service to others led to positions at the Home of the Good Shepherd, Outreach Group Homes, the Hennepin County Home School and Heartland Girls Ranch. On top of everything else she has accomplished CeCe has served on the Safe Harbor Statewide Director Advisory Panel and is an active member of the Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force. Currently, CeCe is certified in the My Life, My Choice curriculum for sexually exploited youth and has completed the Executive Director Leadership Program through the University of St. Thomas. In 2003, CeCe co-authored “Heartland Girls’ Ranch Hearts for Freedom Project: A Resource Guide for Working with Sexually Exploited Youth & Minnesota’s Safe Harbor Law”, and over the years has written her own curriculum, designed specifically for sexually exploited girls.

Seeing an undying need for support focused towards adult victims of sex trafficking, in 2015, (CeCe) left Heartland Girls Ranch, and moved to St Cloud, MN to open her own shelter called Terebinth Refuge for women who have been sexually exploited (and they may bring their children.) This shelter opened its doors April 1<sup>st</sup> of 2018 and quoting the director herself Terebinth Refuge “is a Christ-centered non-profit shelter with onsite transitional home that brings hope, and provides strength-based, trauma-informed, holistic services for sex trafficked/sexually exploited women, transitioning them from bondage to a life of health, stability and independence.” Which is exactly what a sexually exploited individual needs, what a victim needs. At the shelter women will be supported with non-judgmental care receiving trauma-based therapy, equine therapy, psychiatric referrals, advocacy, and independent living skills. On top of that, the women in transition are going to be able to take advantage of case management from survivor advocates, education services, employment education placement training and job coaching. All women are entitled to spiritual services if they like to participate. At Terebinth Refuge, the women can heal through support groups that are focused on sexual exploitation, chemical dependency, trauma, and learn new skills through parent education groups. On site there are wellness and leisure programs as well as an on-site RN. The services at Terebinth Refuge have been created in response to the need and demand for shelter, protection and healing for those who have spent time being exploited.

### **The Need Persists**

The sad part about this exciting addition to our community in Stearns County is that it is limited in availability to serve the volume of community and national needs for services explicitly for victims of sex trafficking. However, on a bigger scale the needs just do not stop at victim services and shelters here in Minnesota. Nationally there is a need for shelters, victim

services, community support, direction from employed survivor advocates as well as affordable and accessible health care services and other victim centered resources.

## **Systems**

In addition to the limitation of resources available for sex trafficking victims, trafficked individuals suffer from the unbalance of living between two identities; the individual and the criminal. Many only see one aspect, the criminal, yet it is apparent that these survivors are in need to be separated from the actions that have led them to the point of having a criminal record. In 2014, The Seattle University Law Review highlighted an article called “Addressing the Tension Between the Dual Identities of the American Prostitute; Criminal and Victim; How Problem Solving Can Help” that spoke about the multiple identities that prostituted individuals carry through their life’s after being victimized and the obstacles that criminal record carries on top of it. One out of every three woman are controlled by a trafficker or a pimp, they are not in control of their own decisions, and they must do what the trafficker dictates always or else suffer from physical beatings and other forms of punishment.

As previously understood, several sex trafficking victims have been exploited since they were children so by the time they encounter law enforcement victims have been with their trafficker for a surmountable amount of time. The trafficker has instilled in these girls an indescribable fear to the point they refuse to disclose themselves as victims if the opportunity arises. Upon police contact these victims are jailed, housed in a cell and released after posting bail, or they are released on their own recognizance by signing a promise to appear notice, or they sit until their sentence and jailtime is served based on the number of arrests and the judges’ recommendations for custody. They victims are not being connected to victim services or even being recognized as a victim at all. The Seattle University Law Review stated that many victim

advocates are supportive of the Safe Harbor Laws being implemented however the contradiction remains when a 14 year old girl “who is molested or raped by an older man would be treated as a victim because she cannot consent by law” all in the same that when a girl of the same age is being exploited by a trafficker/pimp and forced into prostitution and beaten when she returns home is repeatedly arrested and jailed (H. Jacobson, 2014). If the justice system fails to recognize an exploited individual as a victim, they fall through the cracks ultimately gaining a criminal record. In relation to a criminal record the sex-trafficking victim will be eventually forced by societies standards to continue with the cycle of exploitation just to survive, without the supportive-services they need. It is up to us as survivor advocates, crisis advocates and community leaders to step up and provide those who have been exploited with the victim services they deserve.

### **Supporting Victims Through Change**

The Seattle University Law Review went on to support that advocates for those exploited testify to the fact that the services for those who have been trafficked are limited across the nation and the lack of such resources tends to question the cultural norms that are being accepted, the ones that “shield the dynamics of demand and normalize the behavior” within our society that supports the buying and selling of sex (H. Jacobson, 2014).

For change to occur, each system that correlates to an individual’s interactions with others needs to be addressed in relation to supporting an environment that eliminates the risks when it comes to exploitation. Using Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory as a very broad framework we can implement understanding of risks at each level to support an environment to be more positive rather than negative when it comes to battling environmental factors that may influence a person’s course of life choices, trust levels, culture, or actions and decisions

(Psychology Notes HQ, 2013). The closest and most influencing system is our world is going to be our microsystem; this includes our home with primary caregivers, our church, school, and daycares. In a healthy microsystem we learn personal values, culture, trust, self-regulation, and to be aware of the dangers that are less intimate than this current system. If the initial system that shapes our foundation is negative or unhealthy our core needs will not be met, and we will be at risk to several environmental factors that become unsafe and unhealthy at this level and beyond. The mesosystem forms the connections of interactions between the individual and their microsystem, these can either become positive or negative both shaping the development of the individual. The exosystem is a system that indirectly affects an individual such as the general neighborhood, a caregiver's workplace, or extended family, if our other systems fail to educate youth about the risks of exploitation, we can implement that awareness at this level by educating this portion of the community through papers such as this. The macrosystem is the outside most distant system of an individual's world in the form of social values, current media trends and standards of acceptability. At this level the issues of exploitation cannot be ignored. The chronosystem provides the consistency and influence of change in the environment, such as a change in family structure, or societal changes. If all systems work together to educate, protect, and support a framework of abolitionist to eliminate sex-trafficking and exploitation then we would be in a better position as a nation to go against those who support such a demoralizing trade and continuously rising issue.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe that by following a mixture of Radical feminism, Bronfenbrenner's Model, and the Abolitionists perspective we can implement a more complete framework to support victims as they transition from victim to survivor. As we continue to

spread awareness regarding risks in relation to exploitation or sex-trafficking, we create an understanding of contexts that will invoke heightened senses in our youth, our parents and the community. Through community partnership we battle the issues surrounding sex trafficking and exploitation for different reasons with several variations of the combined frameworks with one common goal in mind, the goal to support victims as they transition from a life of exploitation to a life of freedom of choice.



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